



From the President

by Bob Colt



The Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center, September, 2011

If you have passed the Sanborn House recently, you will have noticed dramatic changes. The paint is no longer peeling, the broken column bases are gone, and a beautiful front entrance replicates the 1907 original. More important than good looks, however, is the fact that the front entrance is now handicapped accessible.

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Winchester Receives \$35,000 Grant for Sanborn House

by Nancy Schrock

The Town of Winchester is pleased to announce that it has received a Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections grant for \$35,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The grant will be used to plan a storage facility for consolidated historical collections in the basement of the Sanborn House. These resources include early Town records, Historical Society artifacts, and the manuscripts and photographs currently in the Archival Center in Town Hall.

The project fits well with Sustainable Winchester and the Town's Climate Action Plan. It will fund a team of experts in the fields of conservation, architecture, archives, and engineering who will evaluate current environmental conditions in the Sanborn House, review the building envelope and its capacity for passive and active measures to provide a storage environment that is energy efficient and cost effective. The end product will be designs and specifications to be submitted to the Town for consideration. The final report will be shared as a white paper on the NEH website as a model for other communities.

This is the second time that NEH has recognized the Winchester's collaborative approach to developing an archival program. In 2005 the Town and Historical Society received funds from NEH to conduct a preservation needs assessment. Both grants were written by Historical Society board member Nancy Schrock, on behalf of the Town.

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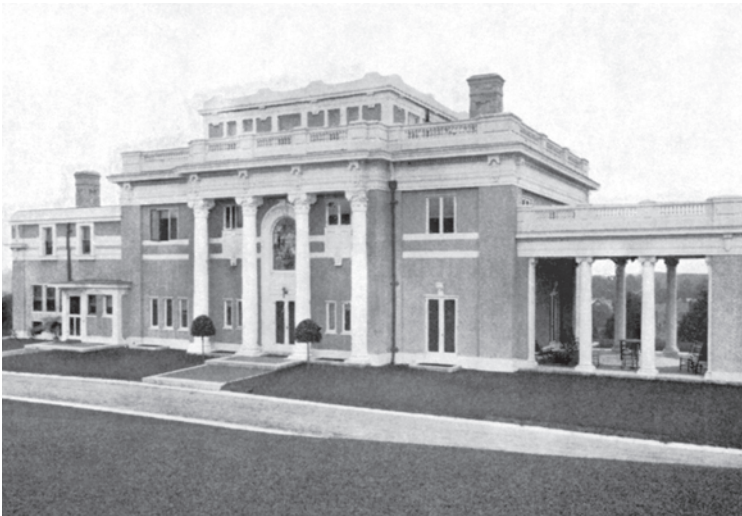
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From the President - continued from page 1)



The Sanborn's new home in 1910 (compare to the photo on page 1)
(Photo Winchester Archival Center).

This major project of the Winchester Historical Society was made possible by the generous support of the En Ka Society and the Griffin Foundation. Their generous gifts of \$15,000 each, along with donations from individuals, allowed us to match the \$45,000 Historic Preservation Project grant awarded to the Society from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Thank you, En Ka and Griffin Foundation!

There have been changes on the interior as well. Our thanks go to the Town of Winchester DPW (Department of Public Works) whose staff has completed a handicapped accessible restroom. None of this, however, would have happened without the support of the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee, the Planning Board, the Town Manager and the Town Meeting members. The ongoing support of the Winchester Historical Society Board and members has been crucial throughout our period of renovation and renaissance. It was Town Meeting's passage of a permanent preservation restriction that allowed us to qualify for State and federal funding.

The Winchester Historical Society looks forward to welcoming residents to the Sanborn House, which is open Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 am – 4 pm. The Sanborn House is a historic and beautiful building that is available for use by the whole community. Please call 781-721-0135 to make an appointment to see the rejuvenated mansion.

As we preserve the past, we build for the future!

Winchester Receives \$35,000 Grant for Sanborn House
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Acting Town Manager Mary Ellen Lannon commented, "Receiving one national grant is an honor but for a town to receive a second is extraordinary. We are fortunate to have the Historical Society as our partner in the effort to collect, preserve, and make available the historical records of our town."

The National Endowment for the Humanities was created in 1965 as an independent federal agency. It supports learning in history, literature, philosophy and other areas of the humanities. Additional information about NEH and its grant programs is available at www.neh.gov.

Welcome 2012

*Mr. and Mrs. Oren Sanborn
request the honor of your presence
at Aigremont Estate
15 High Street*

*on
December 31, 2011
8:00 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.*

*for an evening of
cocktails, dining, and dancing
to celebrate the arrival of the New Year.*

\$200 per person

*Black Tie optional.
Please RSVP before December 10, 2011
as space is limited.*

*Planned by the Winchester Historical Society
Sanborn House Historical & Cultural Center*

RSVP to Winchester Historical Society, 15 High Street with payment. Please include the names of guests, so you can be seated together, and a telephone number or email address.

Until recently very little has been known about the Sanborns of Sanborn House. Now, thanks to the digitization of newspapers and to the Winchester Public Library's subscription to *Historic Boston Globe*, Ellen Knight has uncovered additional facts about the family, its fortunes, and activities. Two articles in this newsletter are the 2nd and 3rd in the series that make use of this information. The initial article, "The Sanborn Fortune" appeared in the April-July 2011 *Black Horse Bulletin*.

Rena Sanborn

by Ellen Knight

Oren Sanborn may have commissioned and paid for the Sanborn House, but it appears as if the house was not so much his as his wife's. Rena Armstrong Sanborn lived there longer than he and apparently was the one to make it the setting for a string of grand social events.



While the portrait of Oren Sanborn that emerges from recently discovered *Boston Globe* newspaper stories is that of profligate bon vivant, that of Rena Sanborn is different. She was a patroness of good causes, a committee woman with a talent for organizing things.

Rena Sanborn was not born to the sort of life she established at Aigremont, the name the Sanborns gave to their estate. She was one of nine children born to John Armstrong, a farmer of Machias, Maine, whose combined real estate and personal property value in 1870 was \$800. Her mother was Elizabeth Halliday, a native of Nova Scotia. In 1885, Rena's brother Ellery moved to Boston and entered the firm of Chase & Sanborn, with which he stayed for 42 years. In 1886, while still in her teens, Rena Armstrong married

Oren Sanborn in Reading, Massachusetts. Ellery and another brother, Lorenzo, married and settled in Medford, Massachusetts.



Mrs. Sanborn at the setting of the corner stone for Winchester Hospital (Photo Winchester Archival Center.)

Married into a prosperous family, Rena Sanborn threw herself into social causes. Her favorite in Winchester was the Visiting Nurse Association which founded Winchester Hospital. She became a member of the VNA in 1903. Beginning in 1907, she organized an annual fund-raising Pop Concert at Town Hall. After the cottage hospital opened in 1912, the operating department was furnished by the Pop Concert Committee, Mrs. Sanborn personally giving the instruments. She also personally donated the planting garden at that hospital. She served on the VNA's Social Service Committee for one year and then moved to the Hospital Finance Committee. As chairman of this

committee, she headed up more fund-raising activities, including a special campaign in 1915 when women of the VNA canvassed the town to raise money to move the hospital out of rented quarters and into a new hospital building. She then became Chairman of the Building Committee. When the corner stone was set, she shared the honor with Mrs. Joshua Coit, first president of the VNA, of spreading the mortar on each side of the stone.

Sanborn was apparently a good organizer. During the influenza epidemic

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Host Your Holiday Event at the Sanborn House!

Affordable grandeur for your holiday events. The Sanborn House will be decorated for the holidays for the month of December. Whether you are hosting a small private gathering or a larger social event the House nicely accommodates these happenings with its beautiful, turn-of-the century details in either large or small rooms now with holiday decorations. There is access to a large kitchen for catered events.

The Winchester Historical Society is leading the fundraising campaign to restore and preserve the architectural integrity of the Sanborn House. By renting the Sanborn House for your event, you are supporting the restoration of this historic home.

To inquire about rental availability please call 781-721-0135, or email director@sanbornhouse.org. Further details on rules and regulations, and rates can be found at www.sanbornhouse.org under Rentals.

Give Society Publications for Holiday Gifts

The Society offers many publications covering the history of Winchester that make ideal gifts year round, but especially at the holidays. Books, maps, notepads and the series "The Architects of Winchester", are all available.

To select a gift, go to the Society Web site at www.Winchesterhistoricalsociety.org and click on Publications in the left hand menu. Select from the options on the drop down menu—books, series, maps and notepads. An order form is also listed that can be downloaded and mailed to the Society.

Some books are also available at Bookends, 559 Main Street, and some maps are available at Winchester Art and Frame, 755 Main Street, both in Winchester.

Rena Sanborn - continued from page 3)

of 1919 when many nurses fell ill and townspeople pitched in to help, Sanborn helped, too. The VNA reported, "Many were the homes where food was a necessity and no one to provide it, so Mrs. O. C. Sanborn organized daily relief with broths and other nourishing food which was delivered to those who needed it." She shared her charitable work with her daughter Helen. Helen participated in several events and arranged her own benefit at the Sanborn house for the Red Cross in 1918, an event including French songs accompanied by Arthur Fiedler of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Sanborn put the Sanborn House itself to use for the hospital. In June 1915, she hosted the graduation exercises of the Nurse Training School run by the Hospital. She opened her home for hospital benefits. In 1921, she organized a horse show on the grounds of Aigremont which turned into a social highlight for many years. After Sanborn had to leave her Winchester home, she continued to organize the horse shows at other locations through at least 1939.

Sanborn was also instrumental in the organization of the Winchester Circle of the Florence Crittenden League, organized vesper services with outstanding artists at the Unitarian Church, was a member of the Ladies' Friendly Society of the Unitarian Church, played an active part in the women's suffrage movement, and was an editor of the League of Women Voters' Bulletin.

Her obituary states she was also active in the Woman's Republican Club, chaired the Massachusetts Peace Society, and was cited by Governor McCall for her work in World War I (though what that was remains a mystery).

Rena Sanborn maintained a friendship with the McCall family and was, in fact, present with Mrs. McCall and her daughters in the Speakers Gallery at Governor McCall's inauguration in 1916, one of only four Winchester people among the 19 guests in the gallery. Oren Sanborn was not at the inauguration. The couple reportedly separated in 1915.

Though Sanborn's projects generally flourished, one in the 1930s failed. At that time a dozen states, including Massachusetts, were considering bills to legalize lotteries to steer the flow of American money going into foreign lotteries and underworld gambling into a new source of income for the states and their welfare departments. Sanborn was president of the Massachusetts Council for Legalizing Lotteries. After Cardinal William H. O'Connell attacked gambling and lotteries, the bill died.

Through the 1930s and 1940s Sanborn's name appeared most frequently in the *Globe* in connection with the Charlotte Cush-

man Club, which sponsored a variety of events, some with celebrity guests such as Jimmy Durante, Ethel Merman, and Dorothy Gish.

Rena Sanborn died in 1947. None of the family returned to Winchester, although Mary (Mrs. Ellery) Armstrong moved here about 1952, by which time the estate belonged to the Archdiocese.

Pandora's Box Mystery Solved

by Ellen Knight



Photo of the 1911 production of *Pandora's Box* at the Sanborn's Estate. (Photo Winchester Town Archives)

A collection of postcards with pictures of young women in Grecian garb on the porch of the Sanborn House has been a long-standing mystery at the Winchester Archival Center. In the March/April 1981 *Black Horse Bulletin*, one was reproduced with the question, "What are these young ladies doing?" In the next issue, with the help of Winchester native Lesley Wilcox, it was revealed that they were in a production of *Pandora's Box* staged by a local dancing class. Yet, when it was, who the girls were, and why they did it were all unanswered questions.

Now that the *Boston Globe* has been digitized, we have the answer. A century ago, *Pandora's Box* was the main attraction at a fête at Aigremont (the name given to their estate by the Sanborns) for the benefit of local charities, particularly the Winchester Visiting Nurse Association's hospital fund.

On the evening of June 19 1911, the grounds were illuminated with lanterns. Scenery was loaned by John Craig of the Castle Square Theater. Electrical effects were in the charge of Mr. Swotland from the Boston Opera House. Screened by small fir trees, a platform had been built for the Winchester Orchestral Society, which volunteered to perform music from Gluck's opera *Orpheus* for the dances.

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*Pandora's
Box Mystery
Solved
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The legend of Pandora was arranged by Mary Kellogg in a series of scenes and dances in three acts, each act beginning with a reading of the legend. Young ladies of the town appeared as Pandora, Epimetheus, Mercury, Diana, Minerva, Venus, Hope, Iris, and Vulcan. A group of maidens and children also performed [the latter including Wilcox, her sister, and Carlene Murphy (later Samoiloff) who went on to a career in the theater].

The list of patrons was long. *The Globe* reported that the reserved seats were sold well in advance and "hundreds viewed the performance from the many vantage points which the surroundings afforded." The reporter supposed that a handsome sum was realized from the event.

This was not the end of fêtes at Aigremont, *Pandora's Box*, or of Grecian dancers on Winchester lawns. In 1912, Mrs. Sanborn presented another fête, this one composed of three unrelated dance episodes again accompanied by orchestra. In 1913, Kellogg arranged another performance of *Pandora's Box* at the Boston Opera House which was reported to be another success. In 1914, once again young ladies clad as Greek goddesses performed for charity, this time raising money for the child welfare work of the Fathers' and Mothers' Club. Presented at the Ginn estate, Winchester, the program was composed of a series of dances and was followed by an organ recital on the Ginn's organ. Mrs. Sanborn was one of the patronesses.

Vegetable Garden at the Sanborn House

by Rebekah Beaulieu

Have you seen the addition of a vegetable garden to the Sanborn House grounds? The Sanborn House is pleased to introduce the "Seed to Plate" program, designed to teach children and their families about sustainable agriculture.

Vittorio Ettore, chef and owner of Bistro 5 in Medford, conceived the program for his children and their fellow students at Ambrose Elementary School. The children have been working in the garden and learning about planting, composting, and recycling. They plan to share their harvest in a meal they will prepare alongside Ettore for their parents. Ettore has done an admirable job of designing the garden and the educational program, and recognition is also due to the WFEE (Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence) organization and the Ambrose School parents for their support.

The Society is thrilled to host the garden at the Sanborn House and to contribute to teaching the younger members of our Winchester community about healthy living.



"Seed to Plate" vegetable garden at the Sanborn House.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

By Randy Bairnsfather

The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps are one of the most valuable resources for researching houses, businesses and public buildings in Winchester. Each atlas, arranged by street, shows the footprint of the building, the construction material used, the number of stories and outbuildings on the plot.

The Archival Center has maps for 1894, 1899 and 1904, but the most frequently used maps are the 1910 and 1916 atlases. They have been used repeatedly and have shown such wear that this summer they were scanned and digitized. Now the bound versions have been put in archival storage and the digitized versions are available on the computer at the Archival Center.

In time, the Archival Center hopes to have them on-line so they may be viewed from home computers.

- Meetings** Board meetings are held at the Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center on the third Tuesday of the month (exception, December 13, 2011) at 7:30 PM. The meetings are open to the public and all are welcome.
- Programs** **Tuesday, October 4, 2011: "Drawing Toward Home: Designs for Domestic Architecture from Historic New England,"** Lorna Condon, Historic New England, 7:00 PM, Winchester Public Library
- Saturday, October 15, 2011: Sanborn House "Facelift" Celebration,** 7:00-10:00 PM, Sanborn House (tickets \$50, \$100, \$250, \$500 or a separate donation; RSVPs by mail, call 781-721-0135 with questions)
- Tuesday, November 1, 2011: "The Middlesex Canal, Winchester's 'Highway' 1803-1853"** Thomas Raphael, Chairman of the Executive Committee, Middlesex Canal Commission, 7:30 PM, Sanborn House
- Sunday, December 4, 2011: Holiday Party,** 2:00-4:00 PM, Sanborn House
- New Years Eve: Black and White Ball,** Sanborn House (see page 2).
- Help Wanted** The Society has many volunteer opportunities. Some tasks can be done at home, others in the Sanborn House. You can help with our programs, collections, or the Sanborn House. For more information, contact Rebekah Beaulieu (781-721-0135; email director@winchesterhistoricalsociety.com) or Nancy Schrock (781-721-1229; email: ncschrock@verizon.net).

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